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# 11- Before the Doors Closed: An Eyewitness Account of The Interior Ministry Fort – Open 24/7



MEELAD





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Before December 1981, **\*\*The Interior Ministry Fort\*\*** in Manama was not merely a security barracks; it was a vibrant, historical landmark and a vital part of our daily life. I remember vividly how its gates remained open **\*\*24/7\*\***.

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This historical Fort functioned as a self-contained community, housing a supermarket and a hospital for its residents. Upon entering the main gate, you would find the Traffic and Licensing Directorate to your right, the supermarket straight ahead, and the security building to the left. We—Sunnis, Shias, and Iranians—lived as one fabric of natural safety, never imagining it could be pierced by treachery.

At night, when all shops in Bahrain closed, **\*\*The Fort\*\*** was the destination. Its supermarket remained open to everyone, with citizens coming from all regions to buy their needs in total peace. In the morning, the traffic offices were crowded; when parking filled up, you would park outside and walk in to finish your paperwork among officers and employees without any barriers.

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Within those walls, our generation learned to drive. **\*\*The Fort's\*\*** yards were where we started our driving lessons and practiced reverse parking. There was no security tension, for trust was the unwritten law.

In that atmosphere, as the son of a prominent lawyer—appointed by the court to defend three of the accused—I examined the documents of the 1981 coup attempt that changed the course of history. My journey began then, before I had even turned twenty. Destiny led me to understand defense policy and observe how this spontaneous safety was transformed into strict security measures, forced upon us by an imported ideology that sought to blow up this "open house."

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The indictments I read revealed treachery beyond imagination. Military uniforms identical to those of the Bahraini police were seized, along with caps bearing the exact Ministry of Interior emblem and matching



Despite the gravity of the crime, the justice of the Bahraini judiciary shone through the sentences. I accompanied my father—may he rest in peace—to visit the families of the three defendants to inform them of the verdict. When my father told them the sentence was **\*\*only 3 years\*\***, the father of one of them cried out in shock: **\*"Is that all?"**

**Praise be to God! Praise be to God!"\***

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I asked my father then: "Why did he shout 'Is that all?' and why was he so overwhelmed with gratitude?" My father replied: **\*"He was expecting the death penalty given the magnitude of their actions. From the shock of such a merciful sentence, he lost control of himself out of joy."\***

**\*\*To be continued...\*\***

**\*\*Dhafer, son of Attorney Hamad Fahad Al-Zayani\*\***

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